
BABERGH CONSERVATIVES



MANIFESTO 2019-2023

BETTER LOCAL SERVICES, LOW COUNCIL TAX

A MESSAGE FROM THE LEADER OF BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

In common with local authorities around the country, Babergh is facing challenges to maintain services as government financial support is dwindling rapidly. We are having to look to new sources of income as well as improving efficiencies in the ways we do things.

We are also facing challenges over how we can accommodate an increasing population and ensure that, of the homes that are being built, there will be enough that are affordable for young people on moderate incomes – both for buying and renting. We also need to be able to attract businesses that will provide the good quality and well-paid jobs that we want for our residents.

We are making some great progress: the first Conservative administration in Babergh's history has achieved much in the past four years. We have taken difficult decisions to drive down costs so that we can continue to deliver effective and efficient front-line services. Indeed, many services have been improved. We have been able to do this because we have a credible strategy for financing our services.

We announced last Summer that we had regained our 5-year land supply and should now be able to implement our planning policies in full, thereby ensuring local control over where development takes place so that it is both appropriate and sustainable, protecting our rural and urban environments, whilst addressing the pressing needs of a growing population. Our new Joint Local Plan is progressing through the consultation and approval stages and will ensure we are in an even better position, with up-to-date policies for the next decade or so.

We are delivering a good number of affordable homes, including increasing Babergh's own council housing stock.

Together with our colleagues in Mid Suffolk, we have set up an investment company to provide steady and growing income to enable us to maintain and improve services for our residents.

Together with Mid Suffolk, we have made a very successful move to Endeavour House, which has been hugely beneficial to the way we work as well as giving us considerable cost savings. Furthermore, we are now attracting some very good new staff who wouldn't have considered us had we still been in Hadleigh and Needham Market.

We have had many notable achievements during the past three and a half years and these are summarised below.

Best regards

John Ward



OUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS

✓ ECONOMY

- ESTABLISHED AN ENTERPRISE ZONE FOR THE REGENERATION OF THE SPROUGHTON SUGAR BEET FACTORY SITE (WITH IBC)
- ESTABLISHED A FOOD ENTERPRISE ZONE AT WHERSTEAD (JIMMY'S FARM AND SUFFOLK FOOD HALL)
- GIFTED GAINSBOROUGH'S CHAMBERS TO GAINSBOROUGH'S HOUSE, ENABLING THEIR EXPANSION PROJECT TO BOOST THE ARTS AND TOURISM IN SUDBURY
- SUPPORTED THE NEW LAVENHAM COMMUNITY HUB, REPLACING THE TOURISM INFORMATION CENTRE
- PROSPECTUS FOR THE REGENERATION OF THE HAMILTON ROAD QUARTER IN SUDBURY.
- DEVELOPED THE SUDBURY VISION FOR PROSPERITY, WITH ITS FOCUS ON ENTERTAINMENT, LEISURE AND BUILDING A NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY

✓ SOUND FINANCES

- BALANCED BUDGETS WITHOUT CUTTING SERVICES
- BUILT A VERY SUCCESSFUL PORTFOLIO OF ASSETS, GENERATING INCOME TO REPLACE LOST GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

✓ PLANNING

- APPROVED MANY MORE APPLICATIONS THAN IN THE LAST PERIOD OF THE COUNCIL
- NEW JOINT LOCAL PLAN WITH MID SUFFOLK NEARLY COMPLETED
- AN INCREASING NUMBER OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS APPROVED OR UNDERWAY

✓ HOUSING

- BUILT 15 NEW COUNCIL HOUSES IN GLEMSFORD AND 12 IN LAVENHAM; 38 TO BE BUILT IN HADLEIGH, BRANTHAM AND SHOTLEY IN 2019/20
- BOUGHT 36 HOUSES ON OPEN MARKET IN 2018/19 WHERE NEEDED FOR RENT OR SHARED OWNERSHIP; MORE TO COME IN 2019/20
- REDUCED EMPTY COUNCIL HOUSE TURN-AROUND TIMES BY 2/3RDS
- INSTALLED SOLAR PV PANELS ON ALL OUR COUNCIL HOUSES

✓ ENVIRONMENT

- CONTINUE TO OFFER A VERY GOOD SERVICE TO RESIDENTS, WITH GOOD TAKE UP ON VERY COMPETITIVE BROWN BIN SERVICE
- DELIVERED AN EXCELLENT WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE, INCLUDING A COMPETITIVE BUSINESS WASTE SERVICE
- DELIVERED AN EXCELLENT HEALTH & FOOD SAFETY SERVICE
- FIRST THREE CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISALS APPROVED, THREE MORE UNDERWAY

PROMISES MADE; PROMISES KEPT



OUR ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE PAST FOUR YEARS

✓ COMMUNITIES

- REINSTATED THE STARS OF BABERGH AND MID SUFFOLK AWARDS TO RECOGNISE EXCELLENCE AND ACHIEVEMENT IN OUR DISTRICTS
- PLANTED AVENUE OF OAKS TO COMMEMORATE THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMISTICE
- PROVIDED SUPPORT FOR DEMENTIA GROUPS

✓ GOVERNANCE IMPROVEMENTS

- BROUGHT WORKFORCE TOGETHER UNDER ONE ROOF AT ENDEAVOUR HOUSE
- SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENTED LEADER/CABINET MODEL: BETTER DECISION MAKING
- REDUCED NUMBER OF COUNCILLORS FROM 43 TO 32 FOLLOWING BOUNDARY REVIEW
- OPENED CUSTOMER ACCESS POINTS IN SUDBURY, SHOTLEY AND HADLEIGH
- SHARED LEGAL SERVICES WITH WEST SUFFOLK COUNCILS
- CONTINUED JOINT WORKING ON SHARED REVENUE PARTNERSHIP (BABERGH, MID SUFFOLK AND IPSWICH)

PROMISES MADE; PROMISES KEPT





PROJECTS THAT WILL START IN 2019

- ✓ NEW HOTEL AND RESTAURANT AT THE END OF BELLE VUE PARK
- ✓ REDEVELOPMENT OF CORK'S LANE FOR NEW HOUSING IN HADLEIGH
- ✓ REDEVELOPMENT OF ANGEL COURT FOR MUCH NEEDED AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN HADLEIGH
- ✓ IMPROVEMENTS TO THE KINGFISHER LEISURE CENTRE IN SUDBURY
- ✓ A NEW POOL AT THE HADLEIGH LEISURE CENTRE
- ✓ A NEW MEDICAL CENTRE FOR THE HARDWICKE HOUSE PRACTICE IN SUDBURY
- ✓ ST. PETER'S CHURCH REGENERATION PROJECT IN SUDBURY, WITH BABERGH SUPPORT
- ✓ FUTURE HIGH STREET FUND BID FOR SUDBURY
- ✓ CONTNUED COUNCIL HOUSE BUILDING ACROSS THE DISTRICT



IF ELECTED TO SERVE THE RESIDENTS OF BABERGH, YOUR CONSERVATIVE
COUNCILLORS WILL:

CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE MOST VULNERABLE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

KEEP COUNCIL TAX AS LOW AS POSSIBLE

DELIVER SERVICES EFFICIENTLY AND CONSISTENTLY

PROVIDE THE RIGHT HOMES IN THE RIGHT PLACES

DELIVER ECONOMIC GROWTH TO PROVIDE WELL-PAID JOBS FOR A GROWING POPULATION

MANAGE THE CHALLENGES FACING LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PROTECT SERVICES

CONTINUE TO IMPROVE SERVICES AND DELIVER THEM IN WAYS THAT MEET THE NEEDS
OF RESIDENTS

CONTINUE TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS AND RELATIONSHIPS WITH OUR COMMUNITIES

PROTECT OUR BEAUTIFUL NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, AND CONTINUE TO IMPROVE OUR
OPEN SPACES AND FACILITIES FOR RESIDENTS AND VISITORS TO ENJOY



HOW WE WILL ACHIEVE OUR AIMS

WE WILL:

- ✓ INVEST IN OUR MARKET TOWNS, GROW OUR LOCAL ECONOMY AND PROMOTE BABERGH AS A PLACE FOR BUSINESSES TO INVEST IN
- ✓ ENSURE BABERGH IS FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE IN THE LONG TERM, WITHOUT IMPOSING A BURDEN ON RESIDENTS
- ✓ DELIVER IMPROVED PUBLIC SERVICES, IN WAYS THAT ARE TAILORED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE MOST IN NEED
- ✓ PROVIDE MORE HOMES – COUNCIL AND OPEN MARKET HOUSES
- ✓ DELIVER AN EFFECTIVE LOCAL PLAN, TO ENSURE THAT WE BUILD THE RIGHT HOMES IN THE RIGHT PLACES AND PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT
- ✓ PROVIDE SAFE AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES
- ✓ COOPERATE AND SHARE SERVICES WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS, AND WORK WITH THEM TO CREATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SUFFOLK THAT IS FIT FOR THE FUTURE



INVEST IN OUR MARKET TOWNS, GROW OUR LOCAL ECONOMY AND PROMOTE BABERGH AS A PLACE FOR BUSINESSES TO INVEST IN

We will raise the standards of the facilities and services in our vibrant market towns, making them accessible and sustainable drivers of growth for our local economy.

We will ease the change of use from retail to residential in our high streets, to respond to the ever-changing pressure from the online market.

We have firm plans to attract new businesses to provide the high-quality jobs needed by our growing population. There will be a strong focus on our market towns, the drivers of growth in the district's economy, and particularly the Sudbury regeneration plans. But we are also committed to ensuring that we provide local jobs for the growing population in the east of the district. We will provide serviced employment land in Sudbury and Hadleigh, to enable the organic growth of local businesses.

We have listened to public opinion and input on a new Babergh 'Vision for Prosperity' for Sudbury and are committed to delivering this. Already, details for the future of the old swimming pool site at Belle Vue park and the Hamilton Road quarter have been drawn up to deliver new housing, leisure and job opportunities. We will also develop a vision for the future of Hadleigh soon.

The current conservative administration is already preparing to take full advantage of the government's announcement of the £675M Future High Street Fund and will be putting in bids for both Sudbury and Hadleigh.

We recognise the huge importance of tourism to Babergh –our world famous artists, the silk and wool industries, the AONBs, the sailing facilities on the Orwell and Alton Water, and not forgetting the indelible mark that the USAAF left on the dark days of the 1940s. We will continue to improve our offering to tourists and ensure our tourism venues and businesses are a great showcase for Babergh and Suffolk. We have donated property to support the expansion of Gainsborough's House.



ENSURE BABERGH IS FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE IN THE LONG TERM, WITHOUT IMPOSING A BURDEN ON RESIDENTS

We will continue to deliver efficiency savings, develop new ways of delivering services and new sources of income to ensure long-term financial stability, and allocate our resources where they can be most effective in order to continue to provide the services that are most important to residents.

We understand the pressures residents are under and will strive to maintain good and consistent services, whilst keeping council taxes as low as possible. Average band D council tax in Babergh is still only £158.86, almost the lowest in Suffolk and which compares well with Labour-controlled Ipswich at £351.63. We will do this by continually exploring innovative ways of providing public services, responsible budget management and looking at new ways of making savings and generating income to replace dwindling government support.

DELIVER IMPROVED PUBLIC SERVICES, IN WAYS THAT ARE TAILORED TO MEET THE NEEDS OF LOCAL RESIDENTS, PARTICULARLY THOSE MOST IN NEED

We will ensure that all our residents can access our services in the way that suits them best. This means building on the roll-out of access points across the district as well as continually improving Web and telephone access. We recognise that there will be some residents who want and value face-to-face contact but most now prefer using online and mobile access. We will increasingly move to end-to-end digital delivery of services to support this and transform the way we work.

We will improve the quality of information we give to residents and also provide more opportunities for residents to meet and ask questions of the council leadership.

We will continue to provide rent reduction to those most in need and ensure that actions to reduce homelessness are effective.



PROVIDE MORE HOMES – COUNCIL AND OPEN MARKET HOUSES

We are committed to providing the right sort of housing growth in the right places – houses that meet the needs and demands of our communities and those who want to live in them.

We will increase the number of affordable homes for buying or renting so that young people can stay in or return to their home communities. Now that the government has removed the borrowing cap for house building, we will increase the current three year commitment of building or buying 210 new council houses. This will enable us to make real progress in tacking the waiting list for homes. We will also bring empty properties back into use.

We will also, in partnership with other housing organisations, build houses for sale on the open market where private developers are unable to proceed.

We will look at how we can provide short term accommodation for the homeless, rather than using B&B accommodation.

DELIVER AN EFFECTIVE LOCAL PLAN, TO ENSURE THAT WE BUILD THE RIGHT HOMES IN THE RIGHT PLACES AND PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT

We will ensure that we have an effective local plan that has truly deliverable allocations and which conforms to the strategy provided by the revised National Planning Policy Framework. This will give us a robust planning policy that can be defended, supported by good neighbourhood plans, and which will protect us from speculative development.

We will work with colleagues in Suffolk to ensure that the necessary infrastructure is put in place – roads, rail, schools, surgeries – to support our growing population. We will make sure that this is done in a joined-up way across planning applications in a given area, not just as a response to each application individually.

We will also ensure that good design principles, including open spaces and landscaping, are promoted to provide high-quality housing that complements the characteristics of our villages.

We recognise the need to protect our environment and distinct heritage for future generations. We have supported the extension of the Suffolk Coasts and Heaths AONB so that it joins the Dedham Vale AONB. We will protect both of these from unsuitable development.



PROVIDE SAFE AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

There is much that a district council can do to create an environment that promotes mental as well as physical well-being, from ensuring sufficient housing of the right mix of tenure types is available to creating safe and pleasant communities and the provision of leisure and recreational facilities.

We are committed to improving well-being for all age groups, but particularly the elderly, thereby reducing the need for residents to access the NHS or social care services. We believe a strategy of prevention is best for everyone. We are partners with Suffolk Sport's Active Wellbeing programme and we will continue to support organisations like the Porch Project to help our young people.

We will ensure our communities are kept clean and we will work with the police and other agencies to fight anti-social behaviour and drug and alcohol dependency problems.

As soon as Civil Parking Enforcement is implemented in Suffolk we will ensure that on-street parking regulations are enforced wherever they apply in Babergh.

We recognise that good public transport is essential for many people and will work with Suffolk County Council and bus companies to safeguard existing services and provide new ones where possible.

We will let Parish councils have a budget for Public Realm services: they can carry out many things more efficiently than the district, and tailor work to their own needs. It should be possible for larger parishes to provide these services for smaller ones.



COOPERATE AND SHARE SERVICES WITH OUR NEIGHBOURS, AND WORK WITH THEM TO CREATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SUFFOLK THAT IS FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Our services are delivered by us and Mid Suffolk together. We are proud to have been recognised nationally for the success of our partnership, winning the iESE Silver Award for working together.

We will remove any remaining barriers to seamless integration between us and also work closer with other public sector bodies in Suffolk to reduce costs and improve outcomes. However, we know that the current system of local government is unsustainable and will not enable us to achieve your priorities.

We need, and you deserve, a Council that will provide even better value for money and financial resilience, reduce duplication of services, work more simply for you and provide greater opportunities for the future. This will deliver real savings without taking away local representation, and will be done in conjunction with devolving more powers to town and parish councils.

We will explore all options for reorganising local government to deliver the best for our local area. We believe that an innovative and open-minded approach to local governance will enable us to deliver better services tailored to your needs, keep council tax low and strengthen our residents' and communities' voices in a more influential manner.

Local authorities, including our colleagues in East and West Suffolk, have recently taken the decision to reorganise themselves to serve their residents better in providing strong and effective local services. We will liaise with other local authorities to learn the lessons from their decisions, assess the options open to us through a series of business cases and move forward quickly to decide how we should best proceed.

Our determination in this process is simply to provide better value for money and cost savings; better services; more simplicity; broader influence; deeper resilience and financial sustainability.



Babergh Conservatives prove every day that they are the people who can be trusted to provide the leadership to ensure that your council delivers better services for all while keeping taxes low, today and in the future.



BABERGH CONSERVATIVES: BETTER LOCAL SERVICES, LOW COUNCIL TAX